

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1        1. A method for rental of digital video signals within an online  
2 environment comprising one or more client computers and at least one network  
3 video server computer connected by a communications link to the one or more  
4 client computers, the method comprising:

5                providing access to an online catalog stored within a memory of a  
6 network server computer, the online catalog including information regarding  
7 digital video signals available for rental from the network server computer;

8                receiving a request from a client computer for rental of a digital video  
9 signal selected from the online catalog for a specified period of time, the request  
10 including electronic payment based on the selected digital video signal and the  
11 specified period of time; and

12                transmitting the digital video signal to the client computer via a  
13 communications link, such that the digital video signal is viewable by a user of  
14 the client computer during the specified period of time.

1        2. The method of claim 1, wherein the providing access to the online  
2 catalog further comprises:

3                viewing the online catalog via a carousel interface, such that information  
4 regarding each digital video signal is presented within one or more horizontally  
5 rotatable rows.

1        3. The method of claim 2, wherein the digital video signal is a  
2 digitally encoded motion picture, such that the information regarding each  
3 digitally encoded motion picture appears as a virtual video box including  
4 original box art as appears on a VHS version of the virtual video box, the viewing  
5 the online catalog further comprising:

6       scrolling rows of virtual box art in a sliding, sideways manner, such that  
7    movie rental from aisles of a video rental store is simulated.

1       4.    The method of claim 2, wherein the digital video signal is a  
2    digitally encoded motion picture, such that the information regarding each  
3    digitally encoded motion picture appears as a virtual video box including  
4    original box art as appears on a VHS version of the virtual video box, the viewing  
5    the online catalog further comprising:

6       scrolling a row of virtual box art in a sideways, continuously animated  
7    action and variable speed, such that a carousel or rack of video boxes rotating  
8    before a user is simulated.

1       5.    The method of claim 2, wherein the digital video signal is a  
2    digitally encoded motion picture, such that the information regarding each  
3    digitally encoded motion picture appears as a virtual video box including  
4    original box art as appears on a VHS version of the virtual video box, the viewing  
5    the online catalog further comprising:

6       sorting the rows of virtual box art based on sort criteria provided by the  
7    user to a movie search engine of the network video server computer.

1       6.    The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
2        encrypting the digital video signal using an encryption key prior to the  
3    transmitting of the digital video signal to the client computer.

1       7.    The method of claim 1, wherein the digital video signal is  
2    encrypted, further comprising:  
3        opening the digital video signal by the user;  
4        redirecting the user to a web site to obtain an unlock encryption key;  
5        enabling the digital video signal for viewing for the specified period using  
6    the unlock encryption key; and

7           disabling the unlock encryption key once the specified period of time has  
8        expired.

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1                   8.        The method of claim 7, wherein the enabling the digital video  
2        signal for viewing, further comprises:

3 storing a machine ID of the client computer; and

4 storing a current time in order to initialize the specified period of time,  
5 such that during the specified period of the unlock key utilizes compares a  
6 machine ID of a computer against the stored machine ID in response to user  
7 attempt to replay the digital video signal.

7 attempt to replay the digital video signal.

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1           9.       The method of claim 7, wherein the specified period is a twenty-  
2       four hour period, such that following the twenty-four hour period, the user is  
3       required to obtain an additional unlock encryption key in order to view the  
4       digital video signal for a further twenty-four hour period.

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1 10. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

2           dynamically creating a user web page for each user based on information  
3   provided by each user during an initial registration at the network server; and  
4           dynamically creating a movie web page for one or more of the digital  
5   video signals available for rental from the network server computer.

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1 11. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

2 providing a user with a listing including one or more unlocked digital  
3 video signals the user has purchased for rental.

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1 12. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

2 providing a user with a listing including one or more digital video signals  
3 designated by the user as being of interest during a previous visit to the web site.

1           13. An online video signal transfer system for rental of digital video  
2 signals within an online environment comprising a plurality of client computers  
3 and at least one network server computer connected by a communications link to  
4 the plurality of client computers, the apparatus comprising:

5           a network server computer including an online catalog stored within a  
6 memory of the network server computer, the online catalog including  
7 information regarding digital video signals available for rental from the network  
8 server computer;

9           a plurality of users, each user associated with a particular computer client  
10 computer, each client computer configured to allow a user to request a digital  
11 video signal from the online catalog for rental of the digital video signal for a  
12 specified period of time, the request including electronic payment based on the  
13 selected digital video signal and the specified period of time; and

14           an online procedure for having a capability to receive the request and  
15 transmit the digital video signal to the client computer via a communications  
16 link, such that the digital video signal is viewable by the user of the client  
17 computer during the specified period of time.

1           14. The online video signal transfer system of claim 13, wherein the  
2 network server computer further comprises:

3           a carousel interface configured to allow users to view the online catalog  
4 via, such that information regarding each digital video signal is presented within  
5 one or more horizontally rotatable rows.

1           15. The online video signal transfer system of claim 13, wherein the  
2 network server computer further comprises:

3           a web page creation procedure having a capability to dynamically  
4 generate a user web page for each user based on information provided by each  
5 user during an initial registration at the network server, and dynamically

6 generate a movie web page for one or more of the digital video signals available  
7 for rental from the network server computer.

1           16. The online video signal transfer system of claim 13, wherein the  
2 network server computer further comprises:

3           a digital video encryption procedure having a capability to encrypt each  
4 digital video signal available for rental from the network server computer using  
5 an encryption key; and

6           a digital video de-encryption procedure having a capability to provide a  
7 user with an unlock encryption key in response to the users attempt to view the  
8 digital video signal at the client computer, such that the unlock encryption key  
9 enables viewing of the digital video signal for the specified period requested by  
10 the user.

1           17. A computer readable storage medium that directs a computer to  
2 function in a specified manner, comprising:

3           an online catalog stored within a memory of a network server computer,  
4 the online catalog including information regarding digital video signals available  
5 for rental from the network server computer;

6           a plurality of users, each user associated with a particular computer client  
7 computer, each client computer configured to allow a user to request a digital  
8 video signal from the online catalog via a communications link for rental of the  
9 digital video signal for a specified period of time, the request including electronic  
10 payment based on the selected digital video signal and the specified period of  
11 time; and

12           an online procedure for having a capability to receive the request and  
13 transmit the digital video signal to the client computer via the communications  
14 link, such that the digital video signal is viewable by the user of the client  
15 computer during the specified period of time.

1       18. The apparatus of claim 17, further comprising:  
2       a carousel interface procedure having the capability to allow users to view  
3       the online catalog via, such that information regarding each digital video signal  
4       is presented within one or more horizontally rotatable rows.

1       19. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the digital video signal is a  
2       digitally encoded motion picture, such that the information regarding each  
3       digitally encoded motion picture appears as a virtual video box including  
4       original box art as appears on a VHS version of the virtual video box, the  
5       carousel interface procedure further comprising:

6       scrolling rows of virtual box art in a sliding, sideways manner, such that  
7       movie rental from aisles of a video rental store is simulated.

1       20. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the digital video signal is a  
2       digitally encoded motion picture, such that the information regarding each  
3       digitally encoded motion picture appears as a virtual video box including  
4       original box art as appears on a VHS version of the virtual video box, the  
5       carousel interface procedure further comprising:

6       scrolling a row of virtual box art in a sideways, continuously animated  
7       action and variable speed, such that a carousel or rack of video boxes rotating  
8       before a user is simulated.

1       21. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the digital video signal is a  
2       digitally encoded motion picture, such that the information regarding each  
3       digitally encoded motion picture appears as a virtual video box including  
4       original box art as appears on a VHS version of the virtual video box, the  
5       carousel interface procedure further comprising:

6       sorting the rows of virtual box art based on sort criteria provided by the  
7       user to a movie search engine of the network video server computer.

1       22. The apparatus of claim 17, further comprising:  
2           a web page creation procedure having a capability to dynamically  
3       generate a user web page for each user based on information provided by each  
4       user during an initial registration at the network server, and dynamically  
5       generate a movie web page for one or more of the digital video signals available  
6       for rental from the network server computer.

1       23. The apparatus of claim 17, further comprising:  
2           a digital video encryption procedure having a capability to encrypt each  
3       digital video signal available for rental from the network server computer using  
4       an encryption key; and  
5           a digital video de-encryption procedure having a capability to provide a  
6       user with an unlock encryption key in response to the users attempt to view the  
7       digital video signal at the client computer, such that the unlock encryption key  
8       enables viewing of the digital video signal for the specified period requested by  
9       the user.

1       24. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein digital video de-encryption  
2       procedure further comprises:  
3           opening the digital video signal by the user;  
4           redirecting the user to a web site to obtain an unlock encryption key;  
5           enabling the digital video signal for viewing for the specified period using  
6       the unlock encryption key; and  
7           disabling the unlock encryption key once the specified period has expired.

1       25. The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the specified period is a twenty-  
2       four hour period, such that following the twenty-four hour period, the user is  
3       required to obtain an additional unlock encryption key in order to view the  
4       digital video signal for a further twenty-four hour period.